STAR WARS
DARTH MAUL
MARVEL
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BUNN
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DARTH MAUL

Book I, Part IV

Jedi Padawan Eldra Kaitis is the prisoner of profiteering gangster Xev Xrexus. Xrexus has gathered the most dangerous crime bosses in the galaxy to participate in an auction to purchase the Padawan.

Sith apprentice Darth Maul has infiltrated the auction against the will of his Master, the mysterious Darth Sidious. With a group of bounty hunters—including Cad Bane and Aurra Sing—Maul plans on kidnapping the Padawan and killing her in order to satiate his desire for vengeance against the Jedi.

Though the kidnapping proceeds successfully, Maul is baited by the Padawan, who claims to be his equal and demands a fair fight. Their potential duel is cut short when Xrexus, having discovered the theft, has their vessel shot down—and invites the disappointed crime bosses from the auction to hunt them for sport....

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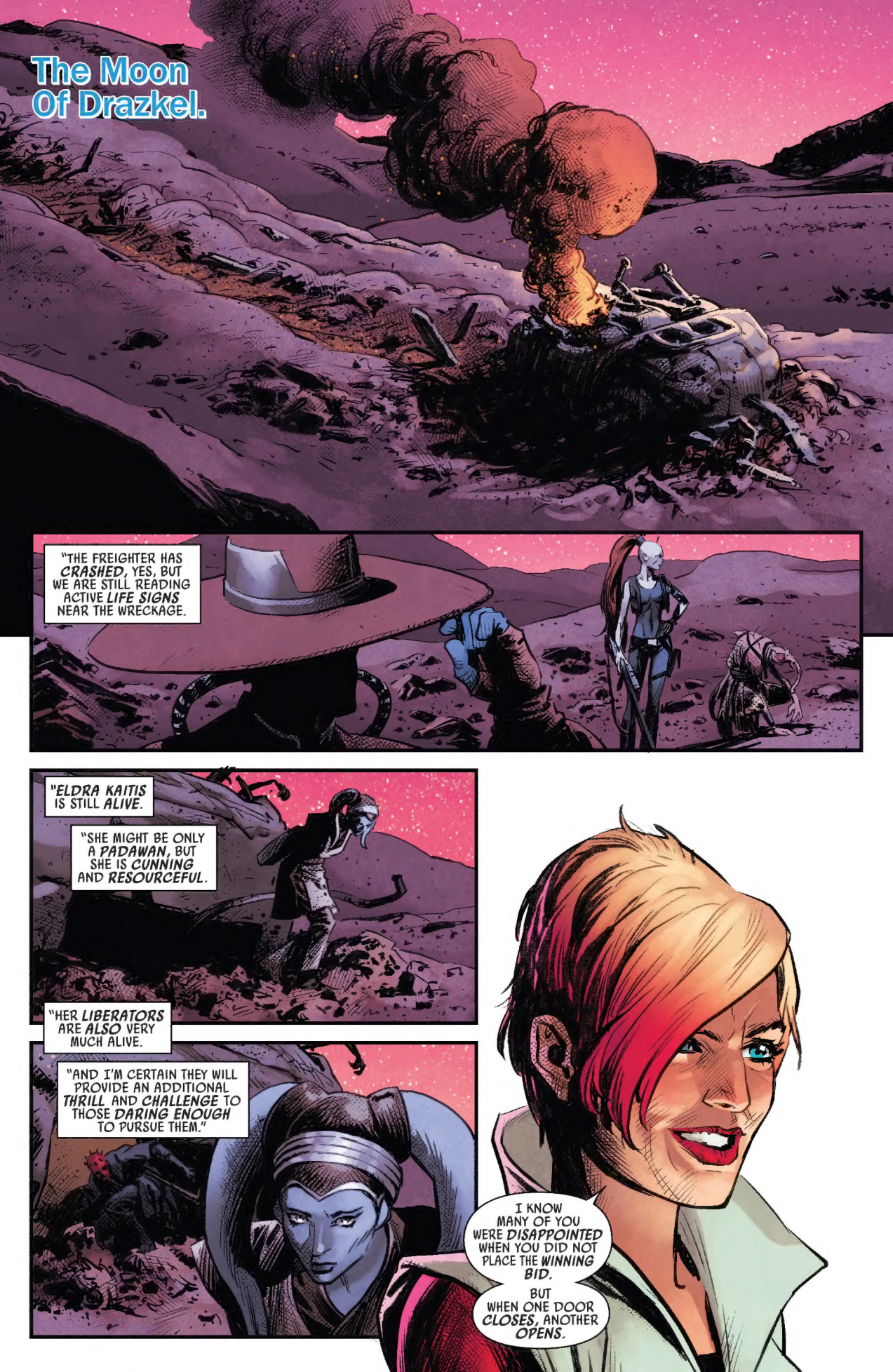

The Moon Of Drazkel.
"THE FREIGHTER HAS CRASHED, YES, BUT WE ARE STILL READING ACTIVE LIFE SIGNS NEAR THE WRECKAGE.
"ELDRA KAITIS IS STILL ALIVE.
"SHE MIGHT BE ONLY A PADAWAN, BUT SHE IS CUNNING AND RESOURCEFUL.
"HER LIBERATORS ARE ALSO VERY MUCH ALIVE.
"AND I'M CERTAIN THEY WILL PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL THRILL AND CHALLENGE TO THOSE DARING ENOUGH TO PURSUE THEM."
I KNOW MANY OF YOU WERE DISAPPOINTED WHEN YOU DID NOT PLACE THE WINNING BID.
BUT WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES, ANOTHER OPENS.

MOST OF YOU WERE PLANNING ON KILLING HER ANYWAY.
SO WHY NOT MAKE A GAME OUT OF IT?
COMPETE AGAINST EACH OTHER FOR BRAGGING RIGHTS AND A SHINY NEW TROPHY.
THE PADAWAN, DEAD AT YOUR FEET.
THOSE WHO ABDUCTED HER, BURNED TO ASH.
THIS IS, OF COURSE, A PAY-TO-PLAY SCENARIO.
THE SOONER YOU PAY...
...THE SOONER YOU CAN BE PLANETSIDE...

YOU SAID IT, BANE.
WE'VE GOT SEVERAL SHIPS COMING IN FOR A LANDING.
I'M BETTING THEY AREN'T HERE TO PLAY NICE.
XEV XREXUS IS MAKING A BIT OF SPORT OUT OF US, AURRA.
US TAKING THE PADAWAN THE WAY WE DID MADE HER LOOK BAD.
SHE'S GOING TO SAVE FACE AND MAKE A BIT OF PROFIT.
THEY'RE HUNTING ME.
YOU WERE GOING TO DIE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
YOU WERE DESTINED TO DIE FROM THE MOMENT YOU FIRST STEPPED INTO A JEDI TEMPLE.
THEY ARE HUNTING ALL OF US.
WELL... YOU KIND OF BROUGHT IT ON YOURSELVES.

YOUR FRIEND'S GOT FIRE IN HER BELLY.
I LIKE THAT.
SHE'S RIGHT, OF COURSE.
WE CAME HERE LOOKING FOR A FIGHT.
WE'LL SPLIT UP.
"THE HUNTERS WILL LIKELY BE *MOST* INTERESTED IN THE PADAWAN.
"WE'LL LEAD THEM AWAY.
"THAT SHOULD GIVE YOUR TEAM ROOM TO... *REQUISITION* ONE OF THOSE SHIPS."
KILL ANYONE WHO GETS IN YOUR WAY.
SCUTTLE ANY SHIP WE DON'T NEED.
WE'LL *STRAND* WHAT FEW SURVIVORS THERE MIGHT BE ON THIS DESOLATE MOON.

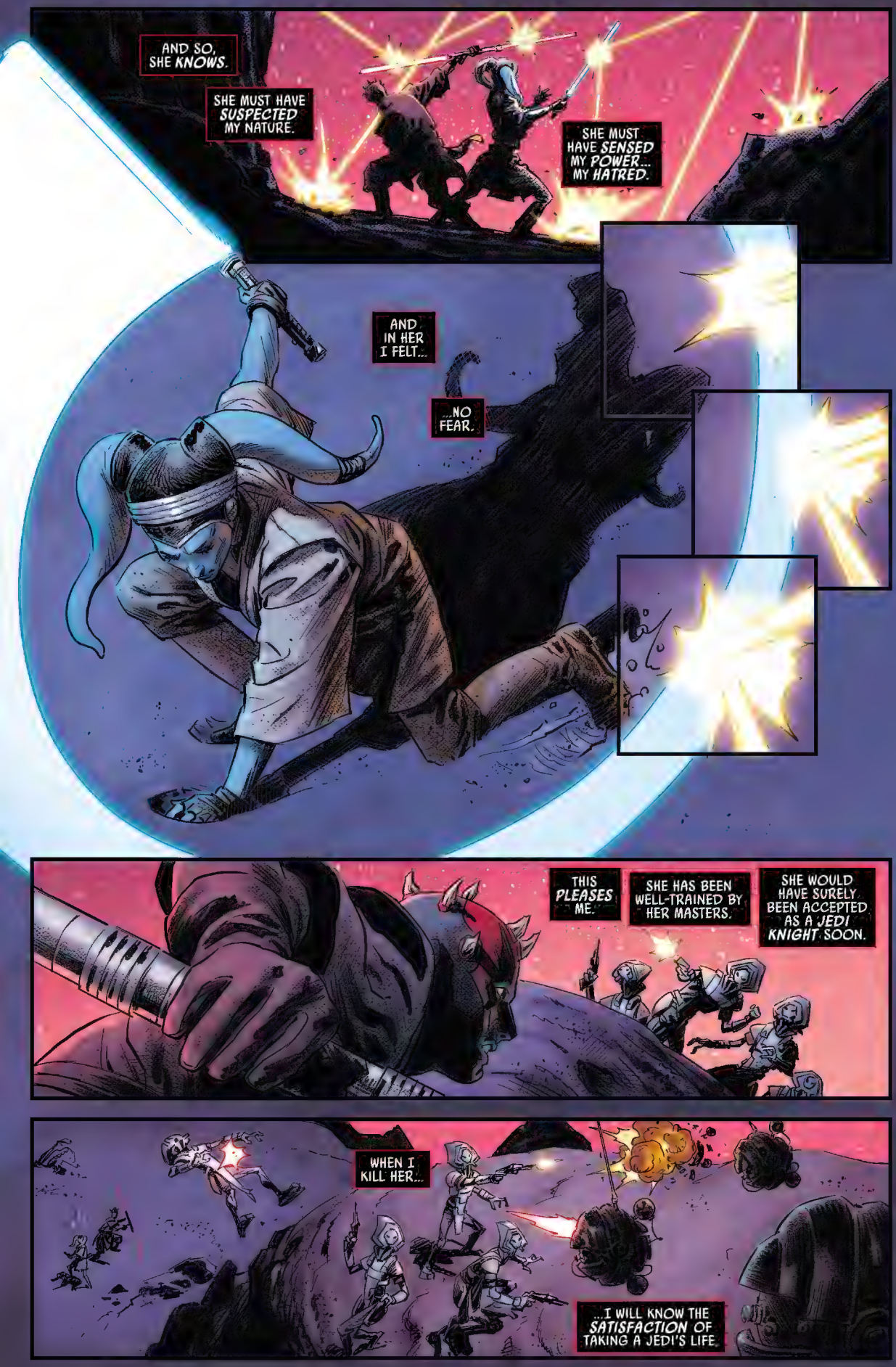
NOT A BAD IDEA.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE WON'T JUST LEAVE YOU HERE ALONG WITH THE REST?
I'M COUNTING ON THE SUPPOSITION THAT YOU WANT TO EARN YOUR HAZARD PAY.
YOU HEARD THE MAN.
WE'VE GOT ANOTHER SHIP TO STEAL.
HAS ANYONE SEEN TEK-TEK?
MY GUESS?
HE GOT HIMSELF VAPORIZED IN THE EXPLOSION.
"LUCKY HIM."

HNNNN.
...NNNN...
HNNH?
DROID!
DROID--HELP ME!
HELP YOU?
MY WORD!
SUCH A STRANGE REQUEST.
W-WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
DON'T JUST STAND THERE!
HELP ME!
I SO DEARLY WISH TO HELP.
BUT I'M AFRAID I WOULD BE USELESS IN THIS SITUATION.
PERHAPS IF I STILL HAD MY EYES...

I HAVE BEEN WRONG.
ALL THIS TIME, I THOUGHT IT WAS ANGER...
...A HUNGER FOR VENGEANCE AGAINST THE ACCURSED JEDI...
...THAT COMPELLED ME ONWARD.
THOSE DESIRES ARE PART OF ME, YES.
I WILL SEE THE JEDI PAY FOR WHAT THEY DID TO THE SITH.
BUT I AM NOT DRIVEN BY THOSE FEELINGS.
THEY ARE CLOSE.
IT IS ANTICIPATION THAT MOVES ME TOWARD MY INEVITABLE GOAL.
IT IS EXCITEMENT.

I COULD HELP, YOU KNOW.
SET ME FREE.
GIVE ME MY LIGHTSABER.
LET ME DEFEND MYSELF.
UNLESS YOU WANT TO RISK ONE OF THESE HUNTERS MURDERING ME BEFORE YOU GET THE CHANCE.
CHAK!

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU.
SPARE ME.
I DO NOT NEED YOUR *JEDI* PLATITUDES.
THE FORCE IS *ALWAYS* WITH ME.


AND SO, SHE KNOWS.
SHE MUST HAVE SUSPECTED MY NATURE.
SHE MUST HAVE SENSED MY POWER... MY HATRED.
AND IN HER I FELT...
...NO FEAR.
THIS PLEASES ME.
SHE HAS BEEN WELL-TRAINED BY HER MASTERS.
SHE WOULD HAVE SURELY BEEN ACCEPTED AS A JEDI KNIGHT SOON.
WHEN I KILL HER...
...I WILL KNOW THE SATISFACTION OF TAKING A JEDI'S LIFE.

THE FIRST OF MANY.
SHE IS WATCHING ME, I KNOW.
TAKING MY MEASURE.
AS I AM TAKING HERS.
SHE HAS ACCEPTED HER FATE...
...OR RESIGNED ME TO MINE.
GOOD.

HOLD UP.
SOMEONE CAME THROUGH HERE.
NOT LONG AGO.
WE'RE CLOSE.
THE JEDI'S MINE.
HATE TO DISAPPOINT.
NO JEDI HERE.

BUT YOU CAN TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT WITH ME IF THAT TICKLES YOUR FANCY.
LOWER YOUR GUNS, BOYS.
IF THIS SCUM WANTS A SHOWDOWN, I'LL GIVE HIM ONE.
IF HE GUNS ME DOWN, LET HIM WALK.
MUCH OBLIGED.
DON'T BE. YOU AIN'T KILLING ME TO--

HSSSSK!
ZRAK!
ZRAK!
VRAK!
WOMP RATS IN A BARREL.
SORRY, FELLAS.
YOU'D BEST BELIEVE I WAS FASTER ON THE DRAW THAN YOUR BOSS.
BUT THAT DON'T MEAN I'M GONNA PLAY FAIR.

SITH.
YES.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE ALL GONE.
ALL...
DEAD.
ALMOST ALL OF US.
THANKS TO THE JEDI.
AFTER ALL THIS TIME... WHY NOW?
WHY SHOW YOURSELF HERE?
I WOULD'VE THOUGHT THE SITH LIKED THEIR SECRECY.
WHY WOULD IT BE WORTH SPOILING THAT TO COME AFTER ME?
MY EXISTENCE WILL REMAIN A SECRET.
I COULD HAVE RUN, YOU KNOW.
I COULD HAVE SLIPPED AWAY DURING THE FIGHT.
YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN INTO YOUR FEAR.
NO.
THAT IS NOT YOUR WAY...EVEN IF YOU WERE NOT A JEDI.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, THEN?
LET'S JUST GET ON WITH IT.
NO.
THIS IS A SACRED RITE.
I WILL NOT LET IT BE SULLIED BY THESE BASE THUGS AND CRIMINALS.
YOU MEAN YOU DON'T WANT WITNESSES.
THAT'S WHY YOU SENT THOSE BOUNTY HUNTERS AWAY.
YOU'RE HIDING SOMETHING... OR FROM SOMEONE.
I CAN FEEL IT.
WHO ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

Later...
THERE IS ANGER WITHIN THIS YOUNG PADAWAN.
I CAN SENSE IT.
I CAN SEE IT IN HER ACTIONS.
ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE...
...SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN TEMPTED TO THE DARK SIDE.
SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN AN ALLY.
BY COMING HERE, THOUGH, BY SEEKING HER OUT, I HAVE TAKEN AWAY SUCH A CHOICE.
MY MASTER MUST NEVER KNOW I WAS HERE.

I HAVE CONDEMNED HER.
WE NEEDN'T BE ENEMIES.
WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GIVE YOURSELF OVER SO COMPLETELY TO THIS... DARKNESS.
IF YOU BELIEVE THAT, YOU ARE NOT THE JEDI I THOUGHT YOU WERE.
YEAH.
I THOUGHT MAYBE I WOULD GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO BACK DOWN BEFORE YOU GET YOURSELF FIRST HUMILIATED AND THEN KILLED.
THAT'S ALL.
THE SAME CHANCE YOUR JEDI PREDECESSORS GAVE THE SITH?
ALL RIGHT, THEN.

AT LAST.
To be continued...

DARTH MAUL
NEXT ISSUE: